The
Pagan
Library

Against The Witch Hunters

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"All this has happened before. And all this will happen again. But this time it happened to..."

Well, us.

The beginning of Sir James Barrie's Peter Pan must echo what many of us are feeling, as we watch a new and loosely-knit conglomerate of yellow journalists, right-wing eco-spoilers and Evangelical and Fundamental Christians move slowly towards a Witch hunt for the 90's. Our spiritual ancestors faced similar problems in many times and many lands.

Recall the Priestesses of Eleusis, last of an ancient line, in decline, falling at last to the stratagems of Theseus and his new Attic Gods. Recall the Etruscans, their vision of sexual-political balance overpowered by the might and organization of the husband-headed Roman empire. And most tender to the touch, recall the agony of the middle ages, as the Catholic, then Protestant churches consolidated their grip on the rural population, killing six million alleged or actual Witches in the process.

The hunt is in a beginning stage and beginnings are important. The formal focus of the television specials, Redbook articles, diatribes in the LaRouchite New Federalist, "Occult Crime" seminars and newspaper articles is some thing called "Satanism", which bears little or no relationship to Wicca and Neo-Paganism.

In fact, media "Satanism" bears little resemblance to any historically verifiable Satanism. It is neither classical Egyptian Set-worship", Romantic Ceremonial Satanism a la Huysmanns nor modern Egoist flamboyance per La Vey. Sometimes it's heavy metal sullenness, drugs and violence, but that's usually only for starters. The heavy metal boys, we're usually told, are just dupes of the Great Conspiracy. And when you get down to the real stuff, the genuine complaint, it's generally the stuff of horror movies and nightmare - baby-eating, virgin-sacrificing bloodsucking monsters!

All this has happened before. And all this will happen again.

There's a limited range of things that can be used to stir up the anger of a populace against a group, or deaden moral sensitivity to a persecution. It pretty much boils down to baby-eating, virgin-sacrificing and bloodsucking.

This has been the century of Hitler's Holocaust. but the Russians who butchered entire Jewish villages in the Pogroms, the inhabitants of York who slaughtered nearly every Jew in the city in the 1100's didn't merely think the Yiddim dressed and talked funny. The accusations were the same. By Jesus, those Jews ate babies! They were just like Satanists, with one exception.

You could find the Jews.

There probably aren't any "Satanists" as portrayed in the articles, seminars and diatribes. If there are, they're certainly not Neo-Pagans or Wiccans. But in the lucrative atmosphere in which the press, missionaries and so-called "Crime Advisers" publicize and proselytize, the word "Witch" creeps in every third sentence.

Naturally, we Witches and Neo-Pagans have spent a certain amount of effort pointing out that we love children like anybody else, have no particular attraction to virginity, and tend, in the most extreme of our diets, to vegetarianism. In short, we have tried to educate our detractors and the media to our harmlessness.

This tactic is true, and this tactic is good, but I think that if it becomes our primary response to persecution we will ultimately fail to endure.

Imagine a Witch in the Middle Ages in front of a Catholic or Protestant tribunal. In some cases she has been denounced by a business competitor, or an envious rival in love, or a spiteful neighbor. In other cases she has been brought to the dock by an expert in "Occult Crime" - the traveling Witch Finder.

She stands bound before her Inquisitors, plain or pompous depending on their religious persuasion. Perhaps there's a crowd around. She tries to educate them to the simple fact that she's a worshipper of the Old Gods, loves children like anybody else, has no particular attraction to virginity, and tends, in the most extreme of her diets, to vegetarianism.

They, in turn, accuse her of worshipping a living fiend, blighting the cattle, and eating babies.

She doesn't stand a chance.

Now picture another scene, one that has not occurred often. She stands before those assembled, and begins, shall I say, to point out some facts. She points out the medieval physician with the two per cent live delivery rate who wants the local midwifery practice shut down. She points out the priest and bishop who are terrifying the once fun-loving populace into penury and pestilence with the twin threats of damnation and the noose. She denounces the Christian nobles who will brook no interference with their rule, least of all from the old Nobility of the land.

She'd be shut up in short order, but in a different way, for she would be addressing the real issues. The nonsense about babies, Black Men and cattle was then, and is now nothing more than a smoke screen to mask real and significant religious and political differences. It's all a cheap trick, a coward's cheat, a way of throwing muck until some sticks. It is only used when the real terms of debate cannot stand the light of day, and it works only if we permit it!

Our situation is in no way as dire as that of our ancestors. Only now have things moved to the stage where one group, the far-right and sometimes farcical Limonites, actively bait Wiccans and Neo-Pagans as being "as bad as Satanists". And unlike our ancestors, we have a freedom of speech they could only dream of. We will not be silenced if we speak, certainly not at this time.

So let's not waste our opportunity! Whenever the "Witch-Hunters" bait us or attempt to smear us with their cannibal taunts, let's find out what the real agenda is, and address it. Make the Lyndonite defend himself against whipping up the population against a minority religion as Hitler stirred hatred against the Jews. Make the entire La Rouche crew explain their suicidal environmental policies, and their editorial statement that "the worship of Mother Earth does indirectly lead to mass murder..." Engage them on the real issues - just what the worship of the Mother really means, and what people are really like that scapegoat innocents and despise nature!

Likewise with the "Occult Crimewatch". Ask them about their sources of revenue. About their religious agendas and connection with Evangelical missions. Ask the if they support religious freedom, and if non-Evangelical religious belief, in their opinion, is a hazard to the public. Ask them, if you can corner them into a frank reply, what on earth they are doing lecturing hate to police officers sworn to protect all the public, Christian and Pagan!

The media deserve the same. Let's not spend more than a breath denying lurid charges. Instead, ask them why they are sensationalizing and smearing a legitimate religion to make sales. Inquire as to whether the German press in the 30's had a responsibility for the slanders on the Jews that they printed. Ask them how they'll feel if harm comes to one Pagan woman or man, girl or boy through their negligence, indifference to non sensational fact and search for sales.

In every case we have an opportunity to turn the tide, by coming right out with our real differences in front of the public, and insisting that the terms of debate be on genuine issues. We must refuse to be backed into a defensive posture, denying ever wilder charges.

Instead let us bring our active advocacy and love of our Gods, of Mother Earth, of our families and children and ourselves to the fore in every debate. We must require our opponents to bare their genuine beliefs and motives, and contrast them clearly with our own in full view. We must sharpen the terms of debate so keenly that no person can leave the scene without having to make a clear and conscious choice about what they value and believe is right.

There's no point in lecturing to the Cardinal. The audience for every debate is not the Witch Hunter, it is the neutral observer. Let them see the love of the Earth, and contrast it to nearsighted greed and poverty of emotion. Let them see the love of the Old Gods and contrast it to a cringing fear of the Father's judgment. Let them see generosity and intelligence and refusal to be sacrificed, and contrast them to venality, cunning and scape-goating. In every debate, let us rise to the height of our capability, and let our opponents have it in the Values - right where it hurts!

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